

Staying Alert! –Changing Behaviors

“Preventing... risky behaviors involves many factors. One of them is the involvement of parents.”²¹

Overview

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSC) or Title IV, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) became law in 2002 to support drug and violence prevention programs in schools. The SDFSC is also intended to support programs designed to prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; and those that involve parents and communities.

Help Your Child Stay Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Free

What you say to your child about using alcohol or drugs makes a big difference. Believe it or not, children DO listen to their parents when they talk about these things—and children say that their parents are a huge influence in their decision not to use alcohol or drugs.

- Talk to your child about the real risks of using alcohol or drugs. If you are having a hard time getting started and need more information, get a copy of *Keeping Youth Drug Free* from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (1-800-729-6686 or www.health.org.)
- Be a good role model for your child: don't take part in any illegal, unhealthy, or dangerous drug use practices.
- Make parenting a priority. Make rules for your child and enforce the rules. Children say that they want rules from their parents—it shows them that you care about what happens to them. Adapt the rules as needed as your child gets older and more independent.
- Help your child learn what to say if offered alcohol or drugs. It's easier to stand up to peer pressure with some practice saying no and being firm about it.
- Know who your child's friends are and get to know the friends' parents or caregivers, too.
- Watch for signs of stress in your child and help your child learn how to deal with stress. Teenagers say stress is one of the reasons they start using drugs.
- Educate yourself. Identify the different types of drugs, their slang names, the signs of use, and their short- and long-term consequences.
- Talk to your child's teacher, school counselor, and the school principal about recommended alcohol, tobacco, and drug programs and materials.



Additional Information & Resources

1. MI Parenting Awareness http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,4612,7-132-2941_4871-65472--,00.html
2. The Partnership at Drugfree.org – Support and Resources for Parents Dealing with Teen Drug and Alcohol Abuse <http://www.drugfree.org/>
3. Above the Influence <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/>

Violence in Your Child's School

You've seen or read news reports about student violence in schools. Most schools are safe, but youth violence is on the rise. As a parent or caregiver, there are steps you can take to help keep your child safe at school.²²

- Request a copy of the school handbook that contains school rules and regulations including anti-bullying policy(ies).
- Be sure you understand what the behavior rules are in your child's school, find out what the punishments are for breaking the rules, and review these with your child. For example, what is your school's definition of a weapon and what happens if a child is caught with a weapon in school?
- Find out if your child's school keeps track of:
 - students who skip school or miss classes.
 - complaints by children of being bullied on school ground bathrooms or on the way to and from school.
 - disrespectful behavior toward the teachers.
 - increasing rates of stealing and vandalism of school property.
 - small groups of students who always seem to be angry or cut off from other students.
- Don't worry alone. Talk with other parents. Organize a parent group with the goal of creating a safe school. Talk to your school principal and offer help.
- Talk to your children regularly. Ask them if they are worried about their safety. They will often have valuable ideas and suggestions.
- Find out who is supposed to be at your child's school for supervision before and after hours. This is important to know if your child is going to school early or staying there late.
- Is there a security system at your child's school? How are visitors handled? How are doors to the outside controlled?
- Talk to your children about being aware of strangers on school grounds or in school hallways.
- Find out if staff members in other organizations in your community, such as libraries, community centers, places of worship, and recreation centers, are also concerned about violence. What programs do they offer that you could adapt to improve school safety?
- Ask other parents who are worried about safety in schools to contact you, or



make an announcement at a community or school board meeting.

- Talk to your child about how to handle anger and problems with others. Talk with your child's teacher, school counselor, or school principal about ways to make this part of classroom lessons.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/>
2. National Crime Prevention Council – School <http://www.ncpc.org/topics/school-safety>
3. Stop Bullying <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>